THE
CHRISTIAN FREEMAN.

No. III. JANUARY, 1833. Vol. I.

## THE PROVINCE OF REASON IN RELIGION.

God has accompanied the revelation which he has given to man with sufficient evidence to prove its Divine origin. Man could not otherwise have been held accountable for his reception or rejection of it. "If I had not done among them," said Christ, "the works which none other man did, they had not had sin." The evidence, therefore, that the Bible is a revelation from God, is to be judged of by our reason, according to the same rules as guide us in judging of other evidence. We are warranted to expect, for example, sufficient testimony to prove that miracles were actually wrought to confirm the truth of what the Scriptures contain; and that the recorded testimony respecting them has been faithfully preserved. Again, prophecy, as another proof of revelation, furnishes a very proper subject of impartial inquiry; and reason does not act presumptuously in investigating whether professed prophecy is really a prediction of future events beyond the reach of human foresight; and whether it was publicly delivered, a record of it made, and that record faithfully preserved.

The first part of the province of Reason, then, is to examine the evidence on which the Scriptures found their claim to be received as a revelation from God.

The very nature of revelation settles the fact, that where no information is conveyed, there can be no revelation. For communicating information, God has been pleased to employ human language; but except human language be employed according to its usual meaning, it can convey, without an interpretor no information. From the very nature, therefore, of revelation, and the mode in which God has been pleased to convey it, human reason must determine its meaning, according to the established rules of explanation. The meaning of the Bible must be determined exactly in the same manner as the meaning of any other book. This is the second part of the province of Reason.

Here, therefore, all is plain and clear. God has furnished reasonable evidence of having, by a direct and special interposition given us a revelation. It is our privilege and duty to

satisfy ourselves respecting the sufficiency of the evidence that God does indeed speak to us in the Bible. That important point having been settled, the next inquiry of our reason is—What does God say to us in the Bible?

In entering on this, it must be remembered, that as God speaks for men, by men, and to men, in the language of men, the principles of interpretation must be common to sacred and profane writings, otherwise there would be no guide to the right understanding of them.

The following are some of the rules which have been laid down for the interpretation of the sacred page:—

1. The terms are to be understood in their plain and commonly received sense.

2. Figures of speech are to be interpreted with reference to the local peculiarities of the country in which the inspired writers lived.

3. Idioms, (peculiarities of expression), are to be understood according to the genius of the language employed.

4. The key to allegorical or mystical discourses must be sought for in the book itself, and not in fancy.

5. What is obscure must be interpreted by what is plain.

6. The scope and tenor of a discourse must be regarded, and no conclusion formed on passages detached from their context, except they are complete in their sense, or obviously intended as self-evident truths and proverbs.

When reason has, by the application of such rules, fairly determined the meaning of the sacred record, her work as a *judge* is at an end; however usefully she may continue to be employed as a *learner*, God has fixed her limit as a *judge*; for, whatever he has revealed as truth should with humility be received as truth; and the mere fact of his having revealed it as true is the highest and noblest of all evidence.

It has been laid down, as a rule of interpretation, that nothing is to be received as revelation which is contrary to reason. Such a rule, however, though to a certain extent correct, should be applied with very great caution. In the desperate extremities to which it has been carried, it would prepare the way for universal scepticism. We cannot, it is true, believe a statement, when we do not understand the terms in which it is expressed. If an individual makes an assertion in words, which we do not understand, we may believe him to be a man of truth, but, as we have no knowledge respecting the particular assertion which he has made, we consequently can have no belief, for, without knowledge there cannot be belief. This however, does not prevent us from believing a fact, when we

understand the terms in which it is communicated, though we may know nothing more respecting it, than merely its existence. To maintain, as many have foolishly done, that where mystery begins, revelation ends, is in fact to maintain, not only that nothing respecting that which is infinite, but that nothing at all could be revealed to a finite being; for where is the subject, in all its connexions, and all its bearings, which a finite being can perfectly understand. To a finite being, there is mystery in every thing, most especially in every thing connected with an infinite God.

If by reason we mean *general* reason, or the true state of things, then nothing in revelation can contradict this, otherwise God would contradict himself, his words and his works being thus opposed; but if we mean *human* reason, then we must apply with much limitation the rule;—That no doctrine in revelation, is to be understood in a sense contrary to reason. Man's reason is very limited, and very liable to err; and therefore we have no right to pronounce a doctrine contrary to reason, except when we have sufficient knowledge to pronounce it to be contrary to the nature of things, with which nature of things we must also be accurately acquainted. Of the true state of things, we obtain a partial knowledge, in some cases, by observation and experience, and in others, by revelation. In either of these cases, we can safely refuse to receive any doctrine which contradicts reason. For example, no revelation could assert, that two bodies could be in the same place, at the same time; for thus, God would be contradicting in words, what he speaks to us in another language by our senses. Again, by the knowledge derived from revelation, we are warranted to assert, that human form and passions cannot be literally ascribed to God, for he has himself assured us that he is a Spirit.

Our knowledge, whether derived from revelation, or independent of it, is, however, very limited; and therefore it should ever be remembered, that where the nature of things is not clearly and satisfactorily known, it cannot be affirmed that a doctrine contradicts it, and is, consequently, contrary to reason. It is equally clear that, when that of which we would form a rational judgment is not itself distinctly apprehended, it cannot be satisfactorily compared with those things, the nature of which we adequately know, and consequently cannot be said to be contrary to reason. We can justly affirm it to be contrary to reason that two bodies can be in the same place at the same time; but we have no right to make such an assertion, either respecting two spirits, or a body and a spirit, simply

because of the very confined extent of our knowledge respecting spirits. To assert, that a man can be at the same time *here* and *every where*, would be violently to contradict reason; but to make the same assertion respecting God, would only be to repeat what has been said by Him who cannot lie.

The forcing of the Bible to bend to the pre-conceived notions of critics respecting reason and the nature of things, has been, to an alarming extent, the destruction of true interpretation, and of true religion. Let us approach that book which God has proved to be his, with becoming humility; with a teachable spirit; let us examine its meaning by the ordinary methods of ascertaining the meaning of human language, and when we have ascertained what is the meaning, let us gratefully receive it, "not as the word of men, but, (as it is in truth,) the Word of God." We will thus act a truly rational part; confining our reason to its proper sphere; exercising it aright in that sphere; receiving constant invigoration to religious principle, and having the whole mental powers enlightened and ennobled, while following onward that path of heavenly investigation which revelation has opened before us.

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## EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-TWO.

EIGHTEEN hundred and thirty-two, farewell! With all thy privileges, and joys, and all thy sorrows too, thou art gone for ever. Thy Sabbaths of peace, thy mornings and evenings, loaded with blessings; thy summer and winter, and spring and autumn, all so full of goodness, have passed like the wind, to return no more. Many a full grave hast thou left behind thee. Widows and orphans will long remember thee, and read thy name on the tombs of husbands and fathers torn from their embrace for ever. The sons of future years will turn to 1832, when calling to mind "the years of the right hand of the Most High." While the judgments of the Lord have been in the earth, he has been, in a wonderful manner, the defence of his people. Some of them, it is true, have fallen, for what else could be expected amid the scourging of the nations; but the pestilence has selected its victims chiefly from the ranks of the intemperate and impure.

*Eighteen hundred and thirty-two*, how inexcusable hast thou left those who have survived thee! They have seen the solitary driver of the cholera hearse, unmindful of the slow measured tread of sorrow, hurrying on the deserted

dead, who but yesterday were hurrying on in active health, unmindful of that grave which, before the setting of another sun, would close over them; they have heard those piercing cries, those deadly groans, which, when once heard, can never be forgotten; they have seen how soon, how very soon, the hand of death can change the beautiful countenance, and bring down giant strength to weakness; and they have seen, too, how utterly vain is all that earth can give when comes the parting struggle; and how patient, and resigned, and triumphant is the spirit which the Gospel gives when flesh and heart are failing. You whom *eighteen hundred and thirty-two* has left unmoved, what coming year shall move you!—Has God's voice not yet been sufficiently loud and clear? and have you not yet been brought sufficiently near to the opened grave? Tens of thousands of your brethren, who commenced last year with you, are now in eternity; must God again wake to judgment, and cut off tens of thousands more before *you* wake to serious thought! Must Egypt's scourge go forth, and cut off all the first-born, before your hardened hearts be broken; or does each of you arrogantly and cruelly call on God to make, by the hand of his justice, wider and more fell desolation still, that your soul may be awakened to reflection? Has the sword of the destroying angel not come sufficiently near to yourself, though near neighbours, intimate acquaintances, and beloved friends, have sunk in death, with only a few dreadful hours of warning;—must a wife or a darling child be snatched away, that you, left alone and desolate, may feel at length, that all here is vanity; or must you be left as "the last man," looking on a world of dead, before your closed ear open to the cry, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?"

Perhaps, however, you fondly dream, that future mercies will make you what your own heart says you are not now. That year must indeed be rich in mercy, which exceeds *eighteen hundred and thirty-two.* Its judgments were mercies in disguise; and heavy as its sorrows were, to not a few they were light afflictions, but for a moment, which wrought for them a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. Though from the beginning to the close of the disastrous year, now gone, our Father in heaven looked forth in anger, from the dark cloud, yet he is OUR FATHER in heaven still; and by what endearing motives has he been drawing us toward him, while the arrows of death fell so thickly around us, and yet we were safe from harm! Every living man, whom *eighteen*

*hundred and thirty-two* has left, stands as a solemn memorial of the long-suffering kindness of God. Oh, then, let us dedicate to his glory, the lives which his mercy has spared.

An individual, notorious for debauchery, when remonstrated with, during the rage of cholera, replied, that ten minutes at any time, would settle the account between him and God. Ten minutes, however, he was not allowed; for in drunkenness, both he and his wife were seized with cholera, and in drunkenness they died. Even to that man, *eighteen hundred and thirty-two* was a year of long-suffering patience: till near its close, a God of patience spared him; and even when taken away in wrath, he was taken in mercy to those who survived him. Let those who in eighteen hundred and thirty-two, put off the time of serious thought to a more convenient season, and who now, in eighteen hundred and thirty-three, look forward still to futurity for a settlement of the *great* concern, Oh, let them think, if they think at all, whether they have any security of obtaining, even the ten minutes which the madness of the poor wretch, now gone, considered sufficient to prepare him for that heaven, which without holiness none shall ever see. But supposing that ten years, instead of ten minutes, and these at the end of a long life, should be allowed in the midst of warnings or of mercies, no madness could be compared with that which would leave to them the preparation for eternity. The days and nights of these years would pass by as the days and nights of other years, and there would be in them no charm to wake up penitence for the past, and honest resolutions for the future; on the contrary, the judgments and the mercies of these ten years, would appeal to hearts, hardened by the perversion of many means of conversion in years before them. The mercies and the judgments of each succeding year, come in the same freshness and vigour from the hand of God, as well qualified as those in the first year of the world to arrest attention, and impress the heart, but they find on each procrastinating man, a melancholy change; his tenderness of conscience is gone, he looks unmoved on that which once filled him with horror, and appeals, which in the warmth of youthful feeling would have melted him in tears, now find him cold and dry. His susceptibility of impression is gone, his heart has rubbed against the world till it has become hard as stone, and he who has so often struggled successfully against impressions, and put serious thoughts far from him, now exercises a terrific mastery over conscience, and a melancholy facility in quenching the Spirit of God. Even the natural seriousness with which he formerly

engaged in the outward forms of religion, has left him. Prayer is a burden, and oh! what a weariness are his sabbaths; the spirit of dissatisfaction with himself is increasing; the sorrows of the world are multiplying, and as each heavy day removes another, and another still, of his former supports and joys, the snows of age are falling, its infirmities and its pains are assembling fast; mercies offered and despised are heaping up against his salvation fearful odds; and over and around his soul, unprepared for eternity, the clouds and darkness of eternal night are closing.

Oh, then, think, you who have out-lived 1832, and whom 1833 finds godless still, think, before it be too late, of the corrupting influence of sin, the increasing power of evil habit, the preparation which one victory over conscience makes for gaining another, the decreasing impression of alarming truth when repeated again and again; think on such solemn, alarming facts as these, and say, are you prepared to put off for another hour, supposing that hour certainly your own, the concerns of your immortal souls, the settlement of that question, before which all others are as nothing, "What must I do to be saved." The answer is not far from you, away at the end of 1842, or 52—for what could these years offer that is not offered by 1833, now rejoicing over you? Could they reveal a more merciful God, a more loving Saviour, a more free salvation; or do you expect them to force upon you, in opposition to your own will, the blessings which God bestows? No, no, "The word is nigh thee even in thy mouth, and in thy heart—that is the word of faith which we preach—that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Welcome, then, 1833, bearing with thee a present salvation; welcome with all thy privileges and joys, and all thy sorrows too, for thou comest from God with a message of love. Thy fleeting moments are full of grace, and thy days and weeks and months are the estate of the poor as well as of the rich; thy suns shine on the just and the unjust, and thy rains fall on the evil as well as on the good; thy Sabbaths are Sabbaths of peace; and in thee the God who sent thee is still waiting to be gracious. May very many date from thee the commencement of renewed life; may the rememberance of thee be sweet through eternity to a multitude that no man could number; and may none, cut off in the midst of thy privileges abused, have reason to cry in despair, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

# MEMOIR OF RICHARD BAXTER.

The Rev. Richard Baxter was born at Rowton, England, in 1615, and spent a portion of his childhood in the neighbourhood of Shrewsbury. In reference to his opportunities of education, he thus writes: —"My faults were no disgrace to any university, for I was of none, and have little but what I had out of books, and very inconsiderable helps of country tutors. Weakness and pain helped me to study how to die; that set me to studying how to live; and that set me on studying the doctrines from which I must fetch my comforts." Being early intent on the office of the ministry, he declined advantageous prospects of rising to fortune at Court; and, after having been for some time employed in teaching the free school at Dudley, he received ordination from the Bishop of Worcester. Acquaintance, however, with non-conformists, and their writings, soon made him dissatisfied with the Established Church.

In 1640, he was appointed to the living of Kidderminster, where, notwithstanding most determined opposition, his labours were greatly blessed in effecting reformation among a people previously notorious for wickedness. Being compelled to leave this place, on account of his attachment to the Parliament against King Charles, he was for some years unsettled, living at Coventry a short time; being, after the success of the Parliament in the battle of Naseby, chaplain to a regiment in active service, and again being confined by ill health, till at length he settled once more at Kidderminster.

Though on the side of Parliament, he was no enemy to monarchy; but, on the contrary, he remonstrated publicly and privately against the usurpation of Cromwell, and on the day previous to the restoration of monarchy, he preached by appointment before Parliament.

Honoured with the office of Chaplain in ordinary to the king; and offered by Lord Clarendon the bishopric of Hereford, which he refused, he could not, however, obtain that liberty which he so earnestly desired of preaching at Kidderminster.

He had, indeed, a liberty of preaching, on condition of saying nothing against the doctrine or ceremonies of the Established church, yet his conscience being ill at ease, and seeing the storm gathering fast, which burst forth with such fury on the famous Bartholomew's day, he set an early example of in-

tegrity and faithfulness, by preaching his farewell sermon to the church, in May, 1662.

In the same year, he married the daughter of Francis Charlton, Esq., a gentleman of large property. She was an excellent and suitable wife, and lived with him nineteen years, as his faithful adviser and comforter, when she died without issue. Previously to their marriage, they entered on the following remarkable agreement. 1. That Mr. Baxter should have nothing which before marriage was hers; so that he, who wanted no outward supplies, might not so much as seem to marry her for covetousness. 2. That she should so order her affairs, that he might not be involved in any lawsuits. 3. That she should expect none of his time, which his ministerial employment called for.

After the expiration of the act against Conventicles, he ventured to preach publicly, but on two occasions he was apprehended, and on one of these imprisoned for six months.

In 1682, he was apprehended during a very severe illness, on the charge of coming within five miles of a corporation, and though he was released by the kindness of Dr. Cox, who made oath that he could not go to prison without danger of death, yet fines to the amount of £195, for preaching five sermons, were levied by the sale of the books and furniture of his house, even to the bed on which he lay, though none of them were his own.

As one specimen, out of many, of the tyrannical measures resorted to, for the purpose of crushing this great and good man, his trial before the infamous judge Jefferies, may be offered. The great charge against him on this occasion, for which he had been committed to prison, was, that in several passages of his paraphrase on the New Testament, he reflected on the Prelates of the Church of England, and so was guilty of sedition, &c.

What he might expect from such a savage as Jefferies he could learn from the reception with which his application met, of having his trial deferred on account of his serious indisposition. "No," said the Lord Justice, in a rage, "I will not give him a minute's time more to save his life. We have had to do with other sorts of persons, but now we have a *saint* to deal with, and I know how to deal with saints as well as sinners. Yonder stands Oates in the pillory, and he says he suffers for the truth, and so does Baxter; but if Baxter did but stand on the other side of the pillory with him, I would say two of the greatest rogues and rascals in the kingdom stood there." After a most shameful

mockery of trial, Mr. Baxter was found guilty, and fined five hundred marks; to lie in prison till the sum had been paid, and to be bound to good behaviour for seven years.

Powerful intercession having at length prevailed on the king to release him from prison, he was liberated, on giving securities for his good behaviour; and he continued afterwards to discharge his public duties in comparative peace.

Baxter's humility was conspicuous on his death-bed, as it had been during his whole life. Many a time did he pray, evidently with strong feeling—"God be merciful to me a sinner." To a friend who was comforting him with the recollection of the good effected by his preaching and writings, he replied—"I was but a pen in God's hand, and what praise is due to a pen."

Under the severest trials, his resignation to the will of God was most exemplary. "It is not for me to prescribe," he would say, even in the severest pangs, "when thou wilt, what thou wilt, how thou wilt." To consolatory expressions used by Dr. Bates, and Mr. Mather, of New England, on the day before his death, he answered—"I have pain; there is no arguing against sense; but I have peace, I have peace." In blessed peace he passed, in his 77th year, from a persecuting troublous world to the kingdom of light and of love.

When it is stated that the character of a faithful minister of the Gospel, as delineated in his Reformed Pastor, is a transcript of his own practice, nothing needs be said to those who have read the work (and all should read it), in commendation of his faithfulness in the solemn trust committed to him. In imitation of his great master, he went about continually doing good.

It was observed by Dr. Manton, "that he came nearer to the the apostolical inspired writers, than any man of his age." His practical writings, said the great Dr. Barrow, were never mended, and his controversial ones seldom refuted. It was the opinion of Dr. Bates, "that his books of practical divinity were effectual for more numerous conversions to God than any printed in our time; and while the Church remains on earth they will be of continual efficacy to recover lost souls." His book, says he, of the "Saint's Everlasting Rest" was written by him when languishing in the suspense of life and death; but it has the signatures of his holy and vigorous mind. He told some friends that six brothers were converted by his "Call to the Unconverted," and that every week he received letters of some converted by his books. This he spoke with most humble

thankfulness that God was pleased to use him as an instrument for the salvation of souls.

Baxter, says Dr. Doddridge, is my particular favourite. It is impossible to tell you how much I am charmed with the devotion, good sense, and pathos, which are every where to be found in him. I cannot forbear looking on him as one of the greatest orators, both with regard to copiousness, acuteness, and energy, that our nation hath produced; and if he hath described, as I believe, the temper of his own heart, he appears to have been so far superior to the generality of those whom we charitably hope to be good men, that one would imagine God raised him up to disgrace and condemn his brethren; to show what a Christian is, and how few in the world deserve the character.

Richard Baxter, says the Rev. James Granger, was a man famous for weakness of body and strength of mind; for having the strongest sense of religion himself, and exciting a sense of it in the thoughtless and profligate; for preaching more sermons, engaging in more controversies, and writing more books, than any other non-conformist of his age. He spoke, disputed, and wrote with ease; and discovered the same intrepidity when he reproved Cromwell, and expostulated with Charles II., as when he preached to a congregation of mechanics. His zeal for religion was extraordinary, but it seems never to have prompted him to faction, or carried him to enthusiasm. The champion of the Presbyterians was the common butt of every other religion, and of those who were of no religion at all.—But this had very little effect upon him; his presence and firmness of mind never forsook him. He was just the same man before he went into a prison, while he was in it, and when he came out of it; and he maintained a uniformity of character to the last gasp of his life. His enemies have placed him in hell; but every man who has not ten times the bigotry that Mr. Baxter himself had, must conclude that he is in a better place. This is a very faint and imperfect sketch of Mr. Baxter's character; men of his size are not to be drawn in miniature.

To the preceeding brief sketch, we subjoin a short extract on Baxter's peculiar religious views, from his life by Orme.

"Baxter is generally understood to have pursued a middle course between Calvinism and Arminianism. That he tried to hold and adjust the balance between the two parties, and that he was most anxious to reconcile them, are very certain. But it seems scarcely less evident, that he was much more a Cal

vinist than an Arminian. I am not sure whether certain effects which began early in the last century, to appear among the Presbyterians of England, may not be traced, in some degree, to the speculative and argumentative writings of Baxter. He was inimical to all the existing systems of doctrine and discipline then contended for, or ever known in the world; while he did not present any precisely defined system of his own. He opposed Calvinism—he opposed Arminianism—he would not allow himself to be considered an Episcopalian, in the ordinary acceptation of the word; he denied that he was a Presbyterian, and scorned to be thought an Independent. He contended for a system, more general and more liberal than was then approved; and wished to place a variety of theological truths on grounds belonging rather to philosophy or metaphysics, than to revelation.

"On himself this species of latitudinarianism produced little injurious effect; but I fear it had a baneful influence on others. It is a singular fact, that the Presbyterians of England, though at first more rigid than the Independents, became, before the death of Baxter, the more liberal party.

"The first stage in that process of deterioration which took place among English Presbyterian Dissenters, was generally characterised by the term, Baxterianism; a word to which it is difficult to attach any definite meaning. It denotes no separate sect or party, but rather a system of opinions on doctrinal points, verging towards Arminianism, and which ultimately passed to Arianism and Socinianism. Even during Baxter's own life, while the Presbyterians taxed the Independents with Antinomianism, the latter retorted the charge of Socinianism, or, at least, of a tendency towards it, in some of the opinions maintained both by Baxter and others of the party. To whatever cause it is to be attributed, it is a melancholy fact, that the declension which began even at this early period in the Presbyterian body in England, went on slowly but surely, till from the most fervid Orthodoxy, it finally arrived at the frigid zone of Unitarianism."

## CYRIL LUCAR, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

THIS eminent servant of God was born in Crete, towards the close of the Sixteenth Century. Having in his youth, travelled through great part of Europe, he acquired an extensive

knowledge of the world, and felt the stirring interest awakened by the Reformation. Educated at Venice, and pursuing his studies from the love of learning, he became master of the Greek, Arabic, Turkish, Latin, and Italian languages. These attainments laid the foundation of his future fame. He was successively Patriarch of Alexandria and Constantinople, and in both situations, he bore a character, which good men must ever love and venerate.

After his removal to Constantinople, Cyril maintained a correspondence with the leaders of the Reformation, both on the Continent and in England; and convinced that their sentiments were characterized by scriptural purity and simplicity, he conceived the noble design of adopting them, to a considerable extent, in the Greek Church. With this view he collected a choice library, procured from England a printing press and types; and published catechisms and other books of religious instruction. He also aided Maximus Calliopolitus in preparing an edition of the New Testament in the *Vernacular Greek;* and wrote for it a preface, in which he maintained the right of all to read the scriptures in the vulgar tongues. He even went so far as to print "*a confession of the faith and doctrines of the Greek Church,*" with a dedication to the English Monarch Charles I. These exertions, however, in the cause of truth, and undefiled religion, fatally exposed him to the malignity of his enemies.

The Romish See was at this time occupied by Urban VIII. The ambition of that Pontiff contemplated the subjugation of the Eastern Church under his lordly sway. In the way of carrying his project into execution, there were many obstacles, but none more formidable than the exalted piety and enlightened zeal of the venerable Cyril Lucar. The ingenuity of the Jesuits was therefore in requisition. For nearly twenty years these dark spirits harrassed him; all their machinations being seconded by the authority and influence of the French ambassador, by the Mahommedans, and by some perfidious Greeks, particularly Cyril Bishop of Berea. His arguments for the supreme divinity of Christ were represented as "blasphemy against Mahomet!!" The religious books which he printed were styled "inflammatory and seditious publications." He was deposed—heavily fined; but under God, the power of the British Government long shielded him from the *deadly* rage of his persecutors. At length, through Bairam's influence with the Grand Seignior, they accomplished their bloody purpose in the year 1638. Bairam, one of the Bashaws,

procured from Sultan Morad an order for Cyril's execution, and had it transmitted to the Governor of Constantinople. The honoured patriarch was immediately apprehended, and imprisoned in one of the castles on the Bosphorus, and being kept for some time in confinement, was committed on the 27th June, 1638, to a body of Janissaries, to undergo the unjust sentence, pronounced by the Sultan. They conveyed him on board a vessel, and put to sea, as if the sentence had been one of banishmeut; but he soon discovered that they were his commissioned murderers. He therefore kneeled down, and, amid the insults of *Turkish* officers, prayed with great fervency and composure. They strangled him whilst engaged in his devotions, and having stripped the body, threw it into the sea. It was found on the beach, and interred by his friends; but even then the malice of his persecutors had not entirely spent itself. The remains were raised, and thrown a second time into the sea; and being again recovered, were committed to the grave in a Greek chapel, situated on a small island, near the bay of Nicomedia, from which they were subsequently removed to Constantinople, and received all the rites of honourable sepulture. "Such," says a writer, "was the end of the great and good man, CYRIL LUCAR, whose piety and sufferings will endear his memory to distant generations." While the narrative of the wrongs which persecution inflicted on him, draws a tear of sympathy from the true christian, let him not fail to profit by this splendid example of faith, resignation, and holy zeal—let him entertain the same love of the holy scriptures, the same ardour in disseminating them, and the same decided attachment to the principles of the glorious Reformation. D.

## PRIESTHOOD AND SACRIFICE.

A PRIEST is a person divinely appointed to mediate between God and man, by means of sacrifice and intercession.

Sacrifice was the most important and solemn rite of Old Testament worship. An animal was slain; its blood was sprinkled round about upon the altar; on the altar too, the victim, either in whole or in part, was burned with fire; all this was performed, not by any individual at his pleasure, but by a regular officiating priest, and offered in worship to Jehovah.—Such was sacrifice.

Do we inquire into the origin of sacrifice? It was of divine

institution. Do we trace its antiquity? We find it coeval with the first revelation of mercy. Is the reason of its appointment demanded? The foundation of the institution lies in the apostacy of the human race, exhibiting a standing declaration of God's wrath against transgression, and of the reconciliation which he has provided. Do we investigate the extent to which it prevailed? It was observed by all the ancient worshippers of Jehovah; and though the knowledge of its true design was lost, the ceremony mingled in the varied forms of Pagan idolatry. It has been practised by nations, strangers to the existence of each other, and has been continued from the remotest ages to the present period.

The institution of sacrifice is founded on the fact, and is itself evidence of that fact, that man is guilty before God, and that he has "conscience of sins." It could have no place in the religion of innocent beings. All over the earth, amid all the diversities of the species, man feels himself an offender; he dreads the displeasure of some superior, awful, unknown being, whom he considers that he has provoked; and hence the innumerable expedients to propitiate the Deity, to which, under the influence of imagination, operating upon ignorance and fear, men have had recourse. Conscious that they have nothing in themselves to screen them from punishment, they go eagerly in quest of some offering, which they suppose may avert the displeasure, and procure the favour of the being whom they dread. Feeling that they are themselves objects of condemnation, they anxiously inquire, if there be any possessed of availing influence at the court of heaven, willing to espouse their interests, and interpose on their behalf. The scheme of mediation and sacrifice, which constitutes the distinguishing peculiarity and glory of christianity, is one which commends itself to the wants and wishes of the human heart. It forms an essential part of revealed religion, and traces of it, however debased and perverted by superstition, exhibiting faithful indications of the workings of human conscience, are conspicuous in the innumerable false religions, that have prevailed among the nations. When Job exclaimed, "Oh that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour," he gave expression to that anxiety of conscience, which operates in the breast of man all over the world. Take the fanatical devotee, who, to obtain remission of sins, inflicts voluntary torture on his own body, and take the enlightened christian, who pleads the high atonement of the Son of God;

both act on the conviction that seems deeply implanted in human nature, that we need an offering of propitiation.

Though an impression of guilt is universal, and though expedients for averting the divine displeasure have universally prevailed, yet the general use of the rite of sacrifice among the nations, is not to be ascribed to any instinct in human nature, nor to contrivance on the part of men, nor to any general, spontaneous or supernatural impulse, prompting to its simultaneous adoption. Sacrifice would not naturally suggest itself to the human mind. Let us remember how we ourselves felt in childhood, and we shall immediately perceive, that the sufferings of the inferior animals are strongly repulsive to natural feeling. In the infancy of the human family, when man was as yet unfamiliarized with the hardening effect of scenes of cruelty and suffering, would not the death of animals produce sensations of awe, and mental recoil, too great to allow us to suppose that sacrifice was an institution of man's contrivance? When we consider this fact, in connexion with the immense expense of property, caused by the constant slaughter of animals, we have strong presumptive evidence, of a truth, clearly confirmed by divine revelation, that sacrifice was a religious rite, instituted for wise and important ends, by God himself, and prescribed to man as an established part of necessary and acceptable worship.

To our first parents, trembling with apprehension and dismay in the presence of their Judge, it pleased him to intimate his purpose of mercy. That revelation was made not only by the word of promise addressing the ear, but by the rite of sacrifice, which addressing the eye, spoke still more impressively to the mind. As the grant of animal food was not made till after the flood, and as it is said, "That the Lord God clothed our first parents in coats of skins," we infer that the beasts from which they were taken were slain for sacrifice by the divine direction. Abel, we are told, "brought of the firstlings of the flock, and of the fat therof; and the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Had Abel offered this sacrifice merely as the suggestion of his own mind, it would have been will-worship, and instead of being accepted, it would have been an abomination to the Lord. "By faith" it is said, "Abel offered unto God, a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous." Had it been any human invention, it could not have been properly said to have been offered *by faith*, for faith must necessarily

have respect to some divine declaration, and in this case, the sacrifice must have been offered in obedience to the command of God to present it, and in dependence on the promise of God to accept it.

At the period of the flood, in the directions given to Noah, for the preservation of a living stock of animals in the ark, we find them distinguished into "clean" and "unclean." The clean, as distinguished from unclean, were such kinds as had been appointed for sacrifice: hence the difference in the number preserved out of these two classes; the male and female of unclean animals being only preserved by two, but the male and female of clean animals being preserved by sevens. What is the record which we have of Noah, on going forth from the ark? He built an altar to the Lord, and of every clean beast and clean fowl he offered burnt-offerings on the altar? What is the record which we have of the acceptance of the sacrifice? "The Lord smelled a sweet savour."

Through Noah and his descendants the rite of sacrifice was transmitted to after times, and when the human family were scattered abroad over the face of the earth from Babel, it was carried along with them. When the nations fell from the knowledge and worship of the true God into idolatry, the ceremony of sacrifice was still retained in their superstitions; and by tradition and custom it has been handed down, and maintained from generation to generation.

Sacrifice, as instituted by God, was a standing memorial of the original intimation of mercy for the remission of sins by atonement. The death of animals exemplified that death which was due to the transgressor as the penalty of sin, and typified that death to which the Redeemer would devote himself in making reconciliation. He that offered sacrifice in *faith* confessed himself a sinner, deserving eternal death; he declared his repentance, and return to God, who had provided a method for his acceptance; he expressed his desire and hope of pardon, through the intervention of sacrifice, and professed his faith in that Saviour who would, in due time, die as a propitiation for sin, and whose propitiation the rite of sacrifice was instituted to prefigure.

In the early ages, it is probable that every head of a family officiated as priest. In after times, the priesthood formed a part of the birthright which pertained to the first born. In the case of Melchizedec, the priestly office was vested with the kingly, in one person. Under the Mosaic dispensation, the priesthood was fixed in the tribe of Levi, and made hereditary

in the family of Aaron. At length, by the sacrifice of himself, Jesus Christ superseded and abolished for ever all offerings for sin. The priesthood and sacrifice of all former dispensations were intended to prefigure His, and they were valuable and acceptable in the sight of God, only as they subserved this end. The true priest at length appeared; the great sacrifice was offered; the shadowy ceremonial of ancient times vanished away, as useful no more; and Jesus Christ stands forth before the eyes of all the world, in his moral glory, single and sublime, and cloudless as the sun high in the summer heavens, the only priest and sacrifice of his church.

In the Levitical order, not only was the office, but the officiator, divinely appointed. Certain laws were given, by which admission to the priesthood was to be strictly regulated. No man was at liberty to assume it at his pleasure. Even those who were descendants of Aaron were obliged to have their pedigree satisfactorily attested. For any to usurp the office was sacrilege, and exposed to the severest punishment. Hence, Uzziah was smitten with leprosy, and hence, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, were swallowed up by the opening earth. A great truth was thus emblematically held forth, respecting the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ. This was the subject of an eternal commission from the Father, with a view to man's redemption. He sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. To lay down his life as a ransom, he received "commandment" of the Father. When he came into the world, he said, "Lo, I come to do thy will," and this will was to make that expiation for sin, of which sin-offerings and burnt-offerings were representations and figures. Accordingly, this astonishing fact was exhibited by the type. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron; so, also, Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but he that said unto him, "Thou art my son; to-day have I begotten thee."

The jealousy with which the priestly office was guarded from sacrilegious intrusion, and the severe judgments which fell on those who, without a regular call, presumed to offer sacrifice for themselves, shows us that it involves guilt of the highest magnitude to invade the priestly office of the Son of God, or attempt to substitute penances, fastings, alms deeds, any works of our own, however useful and valuable they may be deemed, in the place of his atoning sacrifice. To attempt to come before God in any way but through his mediation, and with any propitiatory offering but the merits of his blood,

is to deserve aggravated condemnation. "I do not," said Paul, "frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law then is Christ dead in vain."

What was the business of the priest? It was his duty to intercede for the people, to bless the people, to teach the people, to compassionate the people: the leading part, however, of his employment was to offer sacrifice for the people. "Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, wherefore it is of necessity that this *man* (priest) have somewhat also to offer." The ceremonial priest, in his offering, was a representation of our great High Priest, whose stupendous sacrifice on the cross, alone could expiate human guilt, and give use, and meaning, and acceptance, nay even existence, to the ancient shadowy sacrifices.

CEPHAS.

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## DIRECTIONS FOR SECRET PRAYER.

1. READ a portion of the Scriptures, observing the "rules" given in the first number of the Christian Freeman, p. 34. Your having been engaged in this duty in the family will not xcuse its neglect in the closet. When you go from home, let a Bible be your pocket companion. There are too few of either inns or private houses, in which a copy of this blessed book is left in every chamber.

2. Spend a short time in self-examination. Think of your besetting sins, your mercies, and your wants. Inquire how you have been spending your time—what duties you have neglected—what iniquities have prevailed against you—what lusts must be mortified—and what graces strengthened. And in conducting this investigation, *be honest, be impartial,* and *be in earnest.*

3. After these preparatory exercises, approach the throne of grace with great reverence, humility, and contrition. Consider the awful majesty of Him to whom you are coming, and let the thought, "*thou God seest me,*" hush every agitation, and produce a solemn stillness in the mind. Beware of associating any likeness with the great object of your worship; this would be to erect in the mind a graven image of Jehovah. If you are at a loss how to conceive of the Great Supreme, let this be your direction, *conceive of Him as inconceivable.*

4. Let Eph. ii. 18, be associated with the commencement of every prayer, and come to God through Christ, by the

Holy Spirit. Exercise an appropriating faith in the merits and mediation of Jesus: this will unite you to him, and thus his claims will become your claims, and your prayers his prayers, and the increase of your devotions will mingle with the odour of his all-prevailing intercession, and ascend in a cloud of fragrance before Him that sitteth upon the throne.—Rev. viii. 3, 4.

5. With the feelings of boldness and confidence, chastened with reverence and humility, which attention to the preceding directions, is calculated to inspire, pour out your soul before God, in penitent confession, in thankful acknowledgment, and in earnest and hearty supplication. And neglect not to pray for your friends, your fellow-worshippers, your pastor, and your country, and for the spread of the gospel over the whole world. Remember that the half, and the *first* half of the petitions in the Lord's prayer, relates to a subject which can scarcely find a corner in the devotional exercises of many professing christians.

6. Rise from your knees, looking for an answer, and continue to wait for it with anxious and eager expectation. To retire from the closet, and to dismiss the subject of our petitions from our minds, is to show that we do not care for what we have asked, and that we have been engaged in a solemn mockery of God. Such services, we may depend upon it, can never rise as "a sweet smelling savour" to Jehovah; they ascend as a smoke of abomination before him. Let yours, then, be the resolution of David—"I will direct my prayer to thee, and will *look up*."

M.

## THE DAILY READING OF THE BIBLE.

Is it the duty of the christian to peruse every day a portion of the word of God? Does he regard frequent opportunities of searching the scriptures as blessed seasons to his soul—and can the world ascertain from his practice that such are the the sentiments of his heart? The age in which we live has been often styled "an enlightened age," and in many respects the name is not misapplied. Literature is extensively cultivated; new discoveries are made in science; and the principles which patient investigation has established, are applied to practical purposes of great utility. Every day, the mass of society is more imbued with a desire after knowledge, and furnished with greater facilities for its gratification. This increase of

knowledge, we hail with feelings of joy. To the power which breaks the spell of ignorance, we heartly bid God speed. The ardent pursuit of knowledge, under proper direction, we view as a harbinger of the latter day glory; for many shall run to and fro in the earth, and knowledge shall be increased. But while we would encourage the christian to share in that enligtenment, which is one of the glories of christianity, and to which the followers of Jesus, have so eminently contributed, we would also lift up the voice of warning against the neglect of the holy scriptures. Not to speak of the beauty and sublimity, the touching pathos, the magnificent groupings of poetic imagery, and the splendid eloquence which adorn their pages; not to speak of the authentic narrative which they furnish of creation, of the primitive stock of mankind, and of the branching forth of the nations; not to speak of the amazing products of prophetic inspiration, unrivalled in the history of the world, we would simply remind our readers that the Bible testifies of Jesus Christ. This, to the true christian, constitutes at once its beauty and its excellence. He finds in it the delineation of the character of him who "is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." His attention is directed to Jesus, as he took on him human nature—as he went about doing good—as he expired in agony on the cross—as he arose in triumph from the tomb, and exhibited to his wondering disciples, the evidence of recent crucifixion, and he exclaims with believing Thomas, "My Lord, and my God." The book which details the mysterious operation of the love of God, in the death of his Son, the christian will not—cannot treat with indifference. It is his charter for heaven. His eternal life, the life of his soul, is bound up in the Bible. He feels the frequent and prayerful reading of the scriptures to be absolutely necessary to his spiritual existence. The language of David he adopts as expressing the sentiments of his heart, "I esteem the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food."

He who has been led, under the divine blessing, to appreciate the scriptures, will not fail in the duty of frequently perusing them; convinced that they are the food of the soul, he will not starve in the midst of abundance. Hungering and thirsting after the kingdom of God and his righteousness, he will joyfully come to the "feast of fat things" which his heavenly Father has provided; and his wants supplied, he will exclaim in the overflowings of a greatful heart, "Thy words were found of me, and I did eat them, and thy words was

unto me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart." He drinks water out of the wells of salvation, and each day he feels more assured, that God will supply all his need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

The practice of devoting a portion of every day to the study of the Bible has obtained the highest commendation. The Bereans are declared, on the authority of the Spirit of truth, to have been more *noble* than those in Thessalonica, because they searched the scriptures DAILY. This exercise, however it may be despised and neglected by men, is honourable in the sight of the angels of God, and honourable in the sight of him who sitteth on the throne.

It is not enough to contend for the privilege of reading the Bible—we must *use* that privilege; and if we are christians, we will bless God for the opportunity of studying daily the revelation of his blessed will—of searching the scriptures.

We feel great pleasure in subjoining on this subject the testimony of Elfric, a Saxon monk, who flourished in Britain, amid the darkness of the TENTH century. "Whosoever," says this pious monk "would be one with God, must *often* pray, and *often* read the holy scriptures. For when we pray, we speak to God; and when we read the Bible, God speaks to us. The reading of the scriptures produces a two-fold advantage to the reader. It renders him wise, by informing his mind: and also leads him from the vanities of the world, to the love of God. The reading of the scriptures is truly an honourable employment, and greatly conduces to the purity of the soul. For as the body is nourished by natural food, so the sublimer man, that is, the soul, is nourished by the divine sayings, according to the words of the Psalmist: *How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea sweeter than honey to my mouth.* Happy is he then, who reads the scriptures, if he convert the words into actions. The whole of scriptures are written for our salvation, and by them we obtain the knowledge of the truth." We trust that these observations, under the blesssing of God, may be the happy means of inducing our readers to peruse daily, a portion of the holy scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus. D.

# THOUGHTS ON THE CONNEXION BETWEEN NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION.

*To the Editors of the Christian Freeman.*

I BEG to submit to the consideration of your readers some reflections which have been suggested to my mind by the article, in your last number, on natural religion. It is written with a laudable anxiety to guard against such ideas of the sufficiency of the light of nature as would lead any one to reject or undervalue the light of revelation. In avoiding one extreme, however, we may rush to another equally dangerous. We know that some undervalue natural religion, as much as others overrate it; and, from a veneration and love for the Bible, deny that there ever was, or can be, any knowledge of God or of religion but what is derived from that supernatural source. I do not say that the article referred to maintains this sentiment; but I should be afraid that some of its statements may be so much misunderstood as rather to cherish such a sentiment in the minds of the inconsiderate. It is, therefore, to guard against this extreme, that I am induced to offer the following remarks.

The great question to be considered is, whether it be possible to feel the evidence of revealed religion at all, without being previously convinced of some doctrines of natural religion; and, consequently, whether the light of nature must not precede and introduce the light of supernatural revelation. In short, on what foundation does the evidence of revealed religion rest?

The general view given in the article mentioned above is just and important. Our first parents received from God, in a manner of which we have no experience, certain ideas of religion, which they imparted by direct instruction to their immediate descendants. The first generation of men communicated these in the same manner to the next; and thus they passed from generation to generation, spreading over the world, and though gradually becoming imperfect and corrupt, yet still pervading, in some degree, the various systems of religion which are found even among the heathen. Thus the first ideas or conceptions on religious subjects, not only in every nation, but in the mind of every individual, are awakened by tradition or instruction; while no one can be regarded as forming them for himself, merely from observation or reasoning. But though this view be admitted, there is obviously an essential difference between ideas being merely *awakened* in the mind, and seriously *be-*

*lieved.* The great question, therefore, recurs, on what ground does any individual regard these ideas as true—or, on what does his conviction or serious belief of them rest? What process produces this belief in his mind?

To enter fully into the spirit of this inquiry, we should recollect, that, in early life, a multitude of ideas are awakened in our minds by the communications of our fellow-men, the truth of which we have afterwards to examine; while we retain or reject them according as we find them supported by appropriate evidence. Nursery tales are imparted by tradition or instruction, as well as the most important doctrines of religion; yet we reject the former and retain the latter, merely in consequence of subsequent examination. The same discrimination is made among all our early notions; we bring them to the test of evidence, and we retain, reject, or modify them, exactly as they stand that test. It should be further recollected, that mere *instruction* is not *evidence;* and consequently cannot produce belief. This is obvious, whatever may be its degrees. If instruction merely states a fact, it only awakens certain ideas in the mind, without offering any proof; if it offer proof, that proof is still something different from the instruction, consisting of other facts, from which the fact stated is inferred. The instruction, however, only points to those facts, as existing previously and independently; while, by their intrinsic evidence, they produce conviction in the mind. Even when instruction arranges facts, so as to render the comparison of them easy, still the mind must make the comparison for itself, and perceive evidence intrinsically in the facts themselves. In short, the evidence must be in the facts, and must be directly perceivable by the mind, before there can be any belief.

These remarks apply, at once, to the subject under consideration. Admitting that some tradition concerning the great principles of religion universally prevails, and is the means of instructing mankind, it can only awaken in their minds the first ideas concerning such principles; but after the ideas are awakened, the question still recurs, how they are believed. All belief of them, worthy of the name, must rest on one of two kinds of evidence; either evidence connected with the ideas themselves, or evidence connected with the tradition, proving it to have come originally from God. The first kind of evidence is exactly what is meant by the light of nature, or that which supports natural religion—i. e. certain ideas concerning the Supreme Being recommend themselves to human reason, because they correspond to facts around us, or to the first

dictates or feelings of the mind itself. Such evidence must be directly and intrinsically convincing. But the second kind of evidence presupposes the former, and rests upon it. In other words, before we can believe that any tradition came from God, or any religious instruction was sent by Him, we must have some previous belief of His existence, and some conceptions of his attributes and plans of government—i. e. we must believe some of the doctrines of natural religion, viewed as resting on independent evidence. This almost admits of demonstration; whether we view the case of an individual, or that of society at large. But it may be brought before the mind in the most simple and striking form, by taking the case of one of Adam's immediate descendants.

Suppose, then, that Adam, as a pious parent, carefully imparted to Abel all the ideas concerning religion, which he had received in an extraordinary manner from heaven; let us consider how Abel's mind was likely to be affected by them. In very early life, the ideas thus suggested would probably undergo no rational examination at all; but would remain, like the conceptions of infancy received from parental instruction, respected or venerated, but unquestioned and unconsidered. In such a state, however, they would not be regarded as objects of serious, rational, or religious belief; which, indeed, had not yet commenced in his mind. He could as yet only experience the simple credulity of infancy. We must, therefore, consider the manner in which these ideas could become objects of religious belief; and this could only be in one of two ways. After becoming capable of serious reflection, Abel might compare these ideas with the conceptions which he had otherwise formed; and believe them on account of their coincidence with his own observation of the objects and events around him, or with the primary feelings of his mind. In this case, he would believe them on the evidence of reason. He would be indebted to his father merely for the first suggestion of the ideas, but the belief of them would arise from his own observation and comparison of facts, which furnished the proof. Though his father might assist him in his observations, still there would be a direct appeal to reason, as an independent judge. Adam could only point to facts, but Abel must compare them for himself; while the facts must contain decisive evidence, which could be directly perceived and felt by his mind.

We cannot suppose that Abel believed these ideas merely because his father imparted them, or because his father believed them: for this would be the grossest credulity, and would be

inconsistent with religious character. The only other way, therefore, in which we could suppose that he was led to believe them, would be, by regarding his father, as some how taught immediately by God, and therefore receiving the ideas as coming from a divine source, through the channel of his father's instructions. In this case, however, he must have previously believed in the divine existence. Nothing indeed can be more evident; though it deserves to be deeply impressed on the attention. In whatever way it was first suggested to his mind, Abel must have believed in the existence of God, before he could believe that God held communication with his father. Nothing can be more preposterous than to suppose, that he first believed that God taught his father, and then believed, on his father's instruction merely, that God existed. His belief in the divine existence must have proceeded, in the first instance, from something altogether independent of his regarding his father as a person divinely inspired. In other words, it could not be produced by any belief in supernatural revelation or tradition, but must have preceded and supported that belief.

If we suppose, that Adam might work a miracle to convince Abel, for the first time, that there was a God, we shall immediately have occasion to examine this point. In the mean time, we may proceed to consider the general question, for which these remarks prepare us—Whether in all cases, and among all mankind, natural religion not only rests on satisfactory and independent evidence, but must precede revealed religion, and lay the foundation of any belief in it. As the evidence of revealed religion is of two kinds, external and internal, let us briefly examine these, in order to determine whether they are not both dependent on natural religion.

I. As the external evidences of revelation consist chiefly of *miracles*, let us briefly advert to these.—It is generally admitted, that these are not intended to prove the divine existence: and if any hesitation be felt on the subject, let us consider whether they could possibly do so. It is not suficient to ask whether a mind, which is insensible to the proofs of an intelligent Creator, furnished by the common appearances in nature, is at all likely to perceive evidence of his existence in miraculous events. We should take higher ground, and ask, how a miracle can of itself prove the existence of God, especially to an Atheist, or even to a mind previously ignorant of that existence. By what process of reasoning, or chain of evidence, can this be done? If we deny that the ordinary works of nature possess

such absolute and decisive evidence, as is sufficient to convince the unassisted reason of man of the divine existence, how can we show that miracles possess such evidence?—We should also consider how a mind previously ignorant of his existence, nor disbelieving it, can at all refer a miracle to God. In itself a miracle is merely a wonder, an extraordinary event, experienced in circumstances in which it could not happen, according to the ordinary laws or arrangements in nature. It therefore indicates the presence of some new cause, which does not enter into these arrangements. But by what steps do we refer that new cause to the Almighty? The general reason is, that it indicates a departure from the ordinary laws of nature. These laws, again, we regard as appointed and preserved by him, in such a manner that no departure from them can take place except by his will. The departure from ordinary arrangements is therefore a proof to us, of his interference or permission. But does not all this necessarily imply a previous knowledge or belief, that the ordinary laws of nature are superintended by him; or, in other words, a belief that God exists and reigns over the universe?—We must thus believe in the Supreme Being, before we can refer a miracle to Him, or regard it as any indication of his will. But whence is that belief to be derived? Certainly not from miracles, in the first instance. If therefore, it does not come from the light of nature, or from observing the ordinary operations of nature, how can it exist at all?

To feel the evidence of miracles in its full force, we must not only refer them to divine power, but regard them as expressive of the divine will, especially as indicating the truth of some doctrines. We must therefore have some previous idea and belief of various divine attributes, especially wisdom, goodness, and veracity. We must regard the Deity as free from all caprice; and so uniform in his plans as to allow no departure from them without his own permission, granted for the most important ends. We must view him, also, as so benevolent and so trust-worthy, that he will not deceive his creatures by fallacious appearances; especially by clothing individuals with such supernatural powers, as on the principles of human reason, must exhibit them as messengers from himself, if these individuals are acting contrary to his will. It is by such considerations that we regard miraculous powers as proofs of a divine commission, possessed by any teacher of religion. But surely such considerations cannot be felt when the divine attributes are entirely unknown or disbelieved. Some previous knowledge of them is absolutely requisite, and in proportion

to its extent and certainty, will the mind be affected by the evidence of miracles. Since, therefore, it must precede the belief of miracles, and cannot be derived from them, whence can this knowledge come but from the light of nature?—The same reasoning applies to the evidence of prophecy, into which, however, your space does not allow me to enter.

2. Let us very briefly advert to the internal evidences of revelation, to be satisfied that some previous knowledge and belief, not only of the divine existence, but of the divine character, are absolutely necessary before these can be understood or felt. Nothing, indeed, can be more obvious. The internal evidences consist in the correspondence of the doctrines and peculiar principles of revelation, with our ideas of moral excellence, of the attributes of God, and the plans of his government. It is, therefore, self-evident that such ideas must be perceived by us, and also regarded as just, *before* we can compare them with scriptural doctrines, and prove the latter from their coincidence with the former. If we believe scripture doctrines to be true, because we think they indicate the highest moral excellence, we must surely have some previous conceptions of that excellence which we suppose to be correct. If, again, we believe them, because we regard them as worthy of the divine character, and calculated to promote the divine glory, we must consider ourselves to be in some degree previously acquainted with that character and glory: and if we are convinced of their truth from their consistency with the plans of the divine government, we must be persuaded that we have had such previous experience of that government, as enables us to judge, in some degree, of its principles and plans. Were we totally ignorant of God, of his attributes, and dispensations, the internal evidences of revelation would be to us as nothing: we would be as little affected by them, as the blind are by the beauty of colours, or the deaf by the harmony of sounds. Nay, were we uncertain whether our previous conceptions on such subjects are correct, these evidences would be proportionably weakened. But whence were such previous conceptions derived, and on what evidence is the mind first convinced of their truth? They are supposed to be in the mind before we compare them with what is found in scripture, and they must be regarded as true, before we believe scripture doctrine from its coincidence with them. If we have them at all, therefore, they must come originally from the light of nature; and if they afford solid proofs of the doctrines of scripture, they must rest upon evidence independent of scripture.

Such considerations may satisfy us that the evidence of revealed religion rests upon natural religion, which must be supported by independent proofs, capable of being directly perceived and felt by human reason. If you think this subject is likely to be interesting to your readers, I may afterwards follow out some of the important views which it presents to every reflecting and devout mind. ALPHEUS.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN FREEMAN.]

## OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF PARDON ANSWERED.

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities."—Psalm ciii. 3.

No doctrine of equal plainness is less understood than that of the remission of sins, through the obedience and atonement of our great High Priest; yet no doctrine is more certainly and frequently taught in the scriptures. It is no want of divine authority, therefore, which occasions this misunderstanding, but rather a selfish fondness, prompting a man to conceive in opposition to God's declared mode of salvation, that if his sins are remitted, he is fully prepared for paradise.

To counteract a misunderstanding so helpful to unbelief, and by consequence, to all practical evil, it can be shown that the fullest and most perfect remission is not contradicted by any thing in the present administration of Providence.

A great objection to the *fact*, that sins are remitted, is, that after the remission of them, the persons presumed to enjoy this privelege, can in no respect be distinguished from others, but are evidently subject to evils, known to result from guilt and trespass.

The first part of the objection is, that persons presumed to enjoy the privilege of full remission of sins can in no respect be distinguished from others. To this I answer, that the obscurity resting on this privilege, as enjoyed by them, may be traced principally to two sources—the clemency of the divine government towards the unpardoned, and the merciful donation of various benefits, to persons designed by Providence to be the subjects of pardon, before that pardon itself is actually conferred upon them.

The clemency of the divine govenment towards the unpardoned, when placed in apposition with the blessings granted to pardoned sinners, diminishes the apparent, though not the

real magnitude of those blessings. Were no such clemency displayed, the paramount and inestimable advantages conferred on the justified, though in no respect enhanced by its absence, would be much more visible and illustrious. It is, however, a wise and merciful appointment, not only to leave the transgressor inexcusable, but, if possible, to secure his amendment by remarkable beneficence and forbearance.

Besides, we are hindered from forming a correct estimate of the advantages resulting from the pardon of sin, by the consideration, that persons in an unjustified state receive many important benefits, on the ground of a change designed to be effected. This is granting them by way of anticipation, and is a rich and an admirable display of the perfection of grace.

The other part of the objection is, that persons on whom the remission of sins is certainly conferred, are, like others, subject to evils known to result from guilt and trespass.—To this, I reply, that nothing else could be expected without the introduction of continued miracle, into the divine administration. You are a pardoned individual—but are you not derived from the same common stock with others? Do you not possess the same nature and dispositions? Are not many of the effects of sin, so instantaneous, that nothing remains to the Supreme Ruler of the world, but to prevent the existence of the sinner and his sins, or to allow those effects to ensue? Are the relics of sin still to be found within you, and is the destruction of these relics still incomplete? Have you done all that you can to eject sin, the foe and betrayer of your soul? If not, does your remissness justify no apparent severity from the hand of God? You are pardoned; but your sins had previously placed you on the margin of a fiery gulf. Why regret—why not rather rejoice that the life of your soul is safe, though the tide of wrath flowing in pursuit of guilt may have approached so near, that the soles of your feet have been dipped in its current? You cannot fairly complain. The tempest, it is true, scowls around *your* dwelling as well as *their's*, and the thunder breaks over your head; but the shield of omnipotence covers and preserves you, while they are often crushed like the insects of a day, and sink into an untimely grave. Is there no solace in hope, none in the promises of God? Is it of no account, that he has pledged himself to afford you a safe conduct through the woes and disasters of this gloomy world? The cup of human life, though containing numerous evils, shall be so wisely mingled, that, however nauseous it may prove to your taste, it will not be poisonous.

Again, in answer to the objection, that the pardoned are subject to the same evils as others, it should be remembered, that the pardon of sin entirely respects its real desert or final recompence. This, without dispute, is no less than death in its utmost latitude; the exile of a rational immortal being eager for happiness, from the beatific presence of Jehovah for ever. As man was made immortal, all his deeds have respect to eternity; and therefore punishment for sin less than eternal death not being commensurate with his nature as a moral agent, no less was threatened. The pardon of sin, by consequence, is not necessarily a prevention of any evil, which does not form a part of this death, or unavoidably lead to it. This view is no less scriptural than rational. When David, on the address of the prophet Nathan, said, "I have sinned against the Lord," the prophet not only replied, "the Lord also hath put away thy sin," but likewise added, "thou shalt NOT DIE."—2 Sam. xii. 13. Yet this important and desirable escape from death prevented not the expression of God's just displeasure at his crimes, the continued sorrow of his own heart, nor a variety of grievous and afflictive chastisements which clouded his prosperity, and embittered his remaining days.

Finally, freedom from all temporal evil is entirely inconsistent with that gradual sanctification, which is a main characteristic of christian salvation. But so long as vicious properties have a place in the mind, and infant graces raise only a faint opposito them—that is, so long as the plan of gradual sanctification exists, the believer's endurance of a portion of evil must be indispensable. It is indispensable, because God has not only appointed it as a suitable instrument for subduing vice, preventing temptation, and cultivating the implanted principles of holiness, but he always uses and blesses it for these ends.

Still it may be said, would not the pardon of sin be more certain, more manifest, and more perfect, if these evils did not exist. I answer, it is impossible to prove that it would; for we see such evils greatly diminished in the lives of some, whose worldly prosperity is of the largest growth, and for whose sole comfort, the riches, pleasures, and honours of earth, seem to be designed. But the Scriptures, in place of teaching us that these are the only individuals enjoying the remission of sins, rather exhibit their situation as dangerous and uneligible. On the other hand, the trials and sufferings of a good man, not only are instrumental in improving and completing his graces, but afford fit occasion for a display of his real state to greater advantage at last. As fuel cast upon the fire seems

for a time to suppress its light and heat, yet soon augments them both; so, the numerous troubles of a righteous man, though they may for a time obscure his state, even to his own observation, yet soon prove the unexpected means of unfolding his acceptance with heaven.

To sum up all, if the present state is one in which faith, and other graces are tried, not rewarded; if the laws of God, the laws first written on the human soul, and those connected with man as an accountable being, are uniform, permanent, and immutable; if the remains of sin still lodge in the soul; if there are relapses into sin, and these relapses always possible till death; if the pardon of sin has a special respect to the real desert of sin, or its unavoidable consequence, eternal misery; if the evils allotted to believers are so moderated by a sympathising Saviour, that they may truly be called chastisements rather than punishments; if freedom from every measure of temporal evil is entirely inconsistent with that gradual sanctification which is a main characteristic of man's salvation; and especially, if there is a gracious promise that all things shall work together for the christian's good; if these things are so, then the pardoned have no just ground to complain that in the present world they are subject to the same evils as others.

C. E. G. M.

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## CHURCH COMMUNION.

*A Solemn Appeal on the subject of Church Communion, and Evangelical Ordinances, by an Ordained Minister of the Church of Scotland, to his Reverend Orthodox Fathers and Brethren in that Establishment.—Glasgow: George Gallie.*

"It may be asked, Why is not this appeal made in the regular and ordinary course, at the bar of the church courts? To this I answer, that I have already gone through these different courts, on account of the very subject of this appeal, although it was concealed under mere forms and points of ecclesiastical law, which, in my view, were of no vital importance, in comparison to the main matter studiously passed over; and that I am aware that another ordained minister of the same Establishment has been, and still is, so far as I understand, for the same cause, under the consideration of these courts, where every effort, I believe, is made to suppress or strain the testimony which he bears, under the technicalities of mere ecclesiastical law, unconnected with the fundamental subject of difference. I have in the meantime, therefore, no encouragement to trouble these courts with the question; but should they see reason to visit me in the course of my obedience to the further directions, agreeable to the word of God, which may be suggested in consequence of the Appeal now made, I deem not this step as by any means necessarily precluding the legally constituted manner of trial, nor do I, on the fullest deliberation, consider it as unjust to any concerned, that the matters of difference, if found to be such, should be thus previously declared and made known."

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We are every day more deeply impressed with the necessity of endeavouring to secure purity of church communion. No

services, however laborious and useful, on the part of the christian minister, will compensate for the neglect of applying the principles of the Word of God, in ascertaining character, and admitting professed disciples to the fellowship of the visible church. The observations we shall make, will comprehend the administration of both seals of the covenant of grace; but from the nature of the interesting publication which has suggested them, our thoughts may, perhaps, bear particularly on the ordinance of the Lord's supper.

If the communion of the visible church be not calculated for believers alone, we profess ourselves unable to understand the statements of divine revelation. To us it appears, that the Word of God most expressly and unequivocally puts forward the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ, to the worthy communion of his body and blood. Nor is it any arbitrary arrangement,—any severe or unreasonable prohibition, which excludes the faithless and disobedient from such exalted privileges. The very nature of the institution, which commemorates the love of the Son of God, as it is displayed in the glorious work of redemption, presupposes true discipleship, real devotedness to the Saviour, in all by whom it is observed; and where these qualities do not exist, the observance is wholly unprofitable. *Unprofitable*, did we say? Nay, it is most ruinous to the interests of the soul. What saith the testimony of the Saviour? "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."—1 Cor. xi. 29. The arrangements of the house of God, therefore, in relation to christian fellowship, when they exclude all who are void of the evidences of saving grace, proceed on the merciful principle of withholding what would prove in the reception, a curse instead of a blessing; for it is true, not merely that none but the friends of Jesus have a right to sealing ordinances, but that none else can profit by them.

Having ascertained that the privilege of church membership can be scripturally enjoyed by those alone who are the friends of Jesus, it remains to inquire whether there is any provision in the directions of God's word for carrying this general principle into operation. There seems, at first view, to be a strong presumptive argument in favour of the idea that God would not leave man without a guide in the most important part of practical religion. Is it at all probable that an institution of infinite wisdom, requiring certain qualifications on the part of those for whom it was intended, should yet be left in such a state of vagueness, as that the church could not understand

these qualifications, nor act upon them in the admission of members to her communion? Is the society of christians the only society in the world having no means of distinguishing friends from enemies, and no *power* to expel and to keep out the man whose conduct every day betrays their interests? Is this anomaly to be found in the religion which angels contemplate with veneration? Does the Scripture warrant us in allowing the drunkard, the debauchee, the profane swearer, to sit down at the table of the Lord? Does it authorize the use of wood, hay, stubble, as the materials of the spiritual temple, and not the stones which the hand of Jesus has polished?

On this subject it is necessary to remove the misunderstandings which have been often industriously circulated; and, by exposing sophistry and misstatement, to dispel the prejudices entertained against the views which we advocate. Religion, it is asserted, is a matter between man and his God. The assertion is true, but it is not the whole truth; for religion is, in many respects, a matter between man and man. In the Lord's supper, for instance, christians "testify and renew their thankfulness and engagement to God, and *their mutual love and fellowship with each other* as members of the same mystical body." Now, we ask—is it not perfectly competent for any man, acquainted with his Bible, is it not competent for the members of the church of Christ to determine, with considerable certainity, respecting the existence or non-existence of that "love to the brethren," the exercise of which bears an essential part in this solemn ordinance? To search the heart directly and immediately is the province of God; a province which no man *can* infringe, and which none may dare to infringe with impunity. But that same God has called the attention of his people to evidence the most satisfactory, and by that evidence they must be guided in all their decisions.—"By their fruits ye shall know them," said our Lord; and, in the writings of the apostles, the Spirit of God has given a minute specification of these fruits. The way of duty, then, is plain. Those who stand at the door of admission may receive only the man who has "the scriptural marks and evidences of faith" which belong to true believers. The principle is clear and well defined; none but the consummate hypocrite can pass muster, where it is judiciously applied; and, even in his case, there will be frequent and humiliating detections. "None but true believers," says our author, "are warranted to assume the name and to enjoy the privileges of christian communion;" and hypocrites, also, who have only the semblance of true faith

nd holiness may be scripturally admitted to the same privileges, whilst their real character remains unknown.

Why did the synagogue at Jerusalem, though it had become a den of thieves and robbers, embracing in its bosom, ll that the most zealous advocates of impure communion could esire—why did the rulers and the people of Jerusalem delib-rately reject and excommunicate the Lord Jesus Christ and is Apostles? We have their reason in their own words, "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." ohn xi. 48. It was dangerous to their establishment. And hy did the Church of Rome, in all the largeness of its soul-murdering charity, excommunicate Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius, Melancthon, and all their followers? They were dangerous o the establishment. And why were the Edwards, the Owens, nd the Erskines, of later memory, excluded from the commu-ion of their respective churches? They were dangerous to he establishment. And are not unbelief, impenitence, and ngodliness equally ruinous to the Church of Christ? And hy, then, do not the disciples of Jesus exclude from their ommunion the visible and known unbelievers, the impenitent nd ungodly, in obedience to the express command of their ivine Lord and Saviour, when they know with infinite cer-ainty, that their admission and continuance in communion, re dangerous, nay, fatal to the very being, life, welfare, and rosperity of that establishment, in which they profess to live, nd to have all their hopes of eternal blessedness, even that ingdom which is not of this world.

We warmly recommend this "SOLEMN APPEAL," to he attention of both ministers and people. The author has trongly and fearlessly, put forward scriptural views, on a sub-ect of vital importance. We sincerely hope and trust, that is warnings will not pass unheeded by his brethren, nor ex-ose him to the storm of violence and persecution which raged round the Erskines and Fishers of former days.

## NOTICES OF BOOKS.

*The Young Christian, by J. Abbot, Boston.—Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 12 mo.—p.p. 326.*

WE have derived great pleasure, and, we trust, some profit, rom the perusal of this publication. The author discovers

much originality in the general plan of the work, and he has brought a sound discriminating judgment to the task of illustrating and enforcing christian duty. We have seldom met a finer specimen of "the truly useful, mingled with the agreeable." The illustrations are well chosen; familiar, intelligible by all, yet exhibiting, in the account to which the author has turned them, all the vigour and freshness of new discoveries. No work with which we are acquainted, is better calculated to be generally useful, in promoting the interests of evangelical religion.

The Edinburgh publishers, by this reprint, have conferred another obligation on the christian public. The volume has our warmest commendations; and we pray God that it may be blessed, as the means of leading many to act on the assurance, that *now is the accepted time, and day of salvation.*

We had intended to give a more lengthened notice, accompanied with some extracts; want of space, however, has obliged us to alter our plan.

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## SACRED LITERATURE OF THE JEWS.

EZRA having collected the books of which the scriptures then consisted, divided them into three parts: *the Law, the Prophets,* and the *Hagiographa,* orholy writings. This division our Saviour notices, Luke xxiv. 44. The five books of the law are divided into 54 sections, one of which was read in the Synagogue every Sabbath day. Till the time of the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, they read only the law but that being prohibited, they substituted the prophets. The Maccabees restored the former practice, and ever after, the reading of the law served for the *first* lesson, and the reading of the prophets for the *second.* Hence, in the synagogue at Antioch, Paul stood up to preach, "after the reading of the *law* and the *prophets.*"

The *sections* were subdivided into *verses,* called *pesukim.* This subdivision took place after the return from Babylon. In the public religious services, the usage was to read the scriptures in Hebrew, and after that to render them into Chaldee, and this was done, period by period.—Neh. viii. 8.

The targums of the Jews, originated in the necessity of translating the scriptures into Chaldee, after the captivity. The word *targum* signifies a *translation.* The two principal targums are those of ONKELOS and JONATHAN. The first is a literal translation of the five books of Moses into pure Chaldee: the latter is a paraphrastic translation of the prophets into the same language. Soon after the time of Ezra, the Jewish critics called Masorites, began their labours. They had their name from *masar,* to deliver; because they professed to deliver the scriptures pure to posterity. To this end they numbered every *verse, word,* and *letter;* and even ascertained how often *each letter* occurs in the *whole Bible!* Thus religiously did they watch over the sacred records.

WILSON, PRINTER,
70, HIGH-ST.